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Social and human rights questions: advancement of women

Revitalization and strengthening of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The Secretary-General hereby transmits to the Economic and Social Council the report of the Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women on the activities of the Institute for the period from December 2003 to May 2004, submitted in accordance with paragraph 7 of Council resolution 2003/57, in which the Council requested the Director of the Institute, in consultation with its Executive Board, to present a report to the Council at its substantive session of 2004.



Report of the Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2003/57 of 24 July 2003, the Economic and Social Council requested the Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), in consultation with the Institute's Executive Board, to report to the Council on the implementation of that resolution at its substantive session in 2004.

2. The present report is submitted in response to the above request of the Council. It also takes into consideration the views expressed by the Working Group on the future operation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women in its report to the General Assembly (see A/58/540). The present report covers the activities carried out by INSTRAW since the appointment of a Director on 4 December 2003 through May 2004.

II. Developments related to the institutional structure of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women in line with Council resolution 2003/57

3. In its resolution 2003/57, the Economic and Social Council amended article III of the statute of the Institute replacing the Board of Trustees with an Executive Board. Accordingly, the following Members have been elected by the Council to serve on the Executive Board for a term of three years: Burkina Faso, El Salvador, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Spain. Two vacancies allocated to Member States of Eastern Europe remain to be filled.

4. The Council also amended article IV of the statute of the Institute with regard to the Director and the staff.

5. In the same resolution, the Council requested that the General Assembly, at its fifty-eighth session, consider the final report of the Working Group on the future operation of the Institute. Accordingly, the Working Group submitted its report (A/58/540). Having considered the report, the General Assembly decided, in paragraph 6 of resolution 58/244 to request the Working Group to continue monitoring the implementation of the recommendations and measures contained in its report until the new Executive Board convenes its first session.

6. During the reporting period, in addition to following up on the implementation of its 2003 programmes, the Institute has focused on its revitalization through a series of initiatives, including reactivating contacts with stakeholders, strategic planning, preparation of a portfolio of projects, expansion and enhancement of the technical structure of the Gender Awareness Information and Networking System (GAINS), reinstatement of its internship programme and the intensification of fund-raising activities.

7. The Director has maintained close relations with government authorities in the host country and has received their full support.

8. INSTRAW has carried out an intense agenda with governmental and non-governmental entities and with the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, as well as with academic institutions and the private sector, with a view to seeking collaborative and financial support.
9. As part of these efforts, the Institute has developed a strategic plan for 2004-2007, which outlines specific programme areas where it can make valuable contributions in accordance with its mandate. For this purpose, the Institute secured the collaboration of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).
10. The consolidated version of the strategic plan 2004-2007 will be presented to the Executive Board of INSTRAW at its first meeting for consideration and approval.
11. The strategic plan has been complemented by a portfolio of projects to be financed from extrabudgetary sources. In this exercise, INSTRAW benefited from support provided by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
12. In order to optimize resources and avoid duplication, the Director has maintained close contact with entities of the United Nations system, in particular the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). INSTRAW continued to strengthen its relations with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality.
13. In order to ensure that the needs of all INSTRAW stakeholders are adequately addressed, the draft plan and portfolio have been widely circulated for comments among Governments, organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, relevant entities in civil society and academia.
14. To brief delegations on activities and future plans of INSTRAW and seek voluntary financial support for the Institute, on 11 March 2004, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women convened a meeting for donors and other interested parties.
15. Since her appointment, the Director has been carrying out an intense fund-raising agenda that has included briefings and consultations to seek support for INSTRAW activities with governmental, non-governmental, academic and private sources in Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Finland, Germany, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America as well as with Permanent Representatives of Member States to the United Nations in New York.
16. Further fund-raising activities will be carried out by the Director during the month of May 2004 in China and the Republic of Korea.
17. In addition, the Director held exchanges with a view to establishing cooperation with regional entities such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the Organization of American States (OAS) and PAHO. Consultations and briefings have also taken place with representatives of the regional commissions of the United Nations.

18. INSTRAW has also conducted interesting exchanges with ministers in charge of women's affairs, delegates to the Inter-American Commission of Women, the secretariat of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and parliamentarians participating in the one hundred and tenth Assembly of IPU.

19. As a result of these discussions and exchanges, most donors and stakeholders reacted positively to the strategic plan and to other proposals of INSTRAW. In particular, they shared the view that empowering women is a crucial development issue and are closely examining the proposals presented by the INSTRAW Director.

20. With regard to specific projects proposed by INSTRAW, it has established a cooperative arrangement with United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN). The Institute has received a positive response from UNFPA, which has indicated its interest in partnering with INSTRAW in four projects and in providing support in other activities.

21. INSTRAW's efforts to seek support have resulted in contributions from the TecMilenio University (Mexico). TecMilenio has contributed the redesign and enhancement of the technical structure of the INSTRAW web site. The new site will offer easier navigation and access to the various features. This new structure emphasizes networking and the development of virtual communities.

22. As a result of the cooperation established between INSTRAW and the Inter-American Development Bank, a conference on gender perspectives of remittances will be held during the last trimester of 2004 in Washington, D.C.

23. In order to strengthen capacity-building activities, TecMilenio University, the Inter-American Development Bank and INSTRAW are working together to develop a programme of scholarships for women.

24. Preliminary arrangements are under way for joint activities on gender and security with the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat, academic institutions, and the Government of Mexico.

25. Arrangements are also under way for a joint pilot project on the trafficking of women with the Santo Domingo Field Office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

26. Arrangements are being finalized with the Network of Macro Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Virtual University (Mexico) and the TecMilenio University (Mexico) to establish mechanisms that will enable INSTRAW and its network members to access virtual libraries, educational materials and other relevant information available for the promotion of women. The United Nations Volunteers have provided the services of an expert on web design and networking.

27. In April 2004, INSTRAW, in cooperation with the Dominican Network of Journalists, held a workshop focusing on the integration of a gender perspective in the media.

28. As part of its follow-up to the 2003 work programme reported in the report of the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW (E/2003/59), INSTRAW published an occasional paper on the theme "Overcoming the Gender Digital Divide: Understanding information and communication technologies and their Potential for the Empowerment of Women", which was distributed in Geneva in December 2003.

and during the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2004.

29. INSTRAW is working on a study that analyses the outcome document of the International Conference on Financing for Development from a gender perspective. The study will contain specific recommendations on critical issues aimed at mainstreaming gender aspects in various areas of financing for development.

30. The Institute's internship programme has been reinstated and two interns (from Sweden and the United States of America) are scheduled to join INSTRAW in June 2004. Given the level of interest generated by the reinstatement of the internship programme, it is envisaged that additional applicants will participate in INSTRAW's internship programme during 2004.

31. The Director has represented the Institute at various meetings, such as, the Summit of the Americas (Monterrey); the annual meeting of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (New York); the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (New York); the workshop on engendering the legal and judicial system, in cooperation with the World Bank (Washington, D.C.); the Inter-American Commission of Women (Washington, D.C.); the fifth Ibero-American Congress on Science, Technology and Gender (Mexico); the Congress on the Harmonization of Local Law with International Human Rights Instruments on Women's Rights (Mexico) and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (New York).

32. During May 2004, the Director will also be representing INSTRAW at the Sixth Interregional Consultative Meeting of the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance — UNPAN (China); the fourth High-Level Forum on City Informatization in the Asia-Pacific Region (China); and the Global Summit of Women 2004 (Republic of Korea).

III. Concluding remarks

33. As of this writing, the constitution of the Executive Board of INSTRAW remains one of the highest priorities. The Executive Board plays a vital role, in accordance with the statute of the Institute, including the formulation of policies for activities, approval of its work programme and budget, as well as reporting to the Council. Upon the selection by the Economic and Social Council of the remaining two members of the Executive Board and the review and approval of the Institute's programme of work and budgetary requirements for 2004-2005 by the Board, the Director of INSTRAW will submit both documents to the resumed session of the Council.

34. In conclusion, the Director of INSTRAW should like to express her gratitude to the Economic and Social Council, Governments, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, private foundations and United Nations entities for their continued support to the revitalization process of INSTRAW and her hope that the renewed interest in the Institute's activities will be translated into increased confidence and political and financial support for the Institute.